

HAK
SCOWCROFT
L.L.

U.S. SENDING TASK FORCE
TO INDIAN OCEAN.

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ALERT

WASHINGTON (AP)-THE UNITED STATES, IN RESPONSE TO THE CONTINUING BUILD UP OF SOVIET NAVAL STRENGTH IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, IS ENDING A CARRIER TASK FORCE INTO THE ADJOINING INDIAN OCEAN, THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT SAID TODAY.

PENTAGON SPOKESMAN JERRY FRIEDHEIM SAID THE ORDER DISPATCHING THE CARRIER HANCOCK AND FIVE DESTROYERS FROM THE PACIFIC OCEAN FLEET WAS DELIVERED DURING LAST WEEK'S NEAR CONFRONTATION WITH THE SOVIET UNION.

U.S. OFFICIALS SAID A DECISION HAS NOT BEEN MADE ON WHETHER THE CARRIER TASK FORCE WILL CONTINUE STEAMING TOWARD THE MIDDLE EAST. THE SOVIET FLEET HAD CONTINUED GROWING IN THE MEDITERRANEAN SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW FIGHTING IN THE MIDDLE EAST. FRIEDHEIM SAID OVER THE WEEKEND THE RUSSIAN FLEET GREW FROM 85 VESSELS TO 90. MORE THAN HALF OF THOSE ARE COMBAT VESSELS.

FRIEDHEIM SAID, HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN NO INCREASE IN THE SOVIET FLEET OF ABOUT 20 SHIPS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN.

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WASHINGTON -- ADD ALERT (76)

THE PENTAGON SPOKESMAN SAID THE HANCOCK, ACCOMPANIED BY THE DESTROYERS AND AN OIL SUPPLY SHIP TRAVELING THROUGH THE STRAITS OF MALACCA, IS EXPECTED TO BE WELL INTO THE INDIAN OCEAN IS ABOUT A DAY.

IN VOLUNTEERING INFORMATION ON THE NEW AMERICAN NAVAL MOVEMENTS, FRIEDHEIM REFERRED TO REPORTS THAT THE SOVIETS WERE MOVING TWO GUIDED-MISSILE DESTROYERS AND ONE GUIDED-MISSILE CRUISER THROUGH THE BOSPORUS STRAITS FROM THE BLACK SEA INTO THE MEDITERRANEAN.

FRIEDHEIM SAID SHIFTING THE HANCOCK IS A "MOVE WHICH WAS THOUGHT PRUDENT.

"WE ARE WATCHING WITH INTEREST THE INCREASING SIZE OF THE SOVIET FLEET," HE SAID.

MOVING THE HANCOCK REQUIRES REDUCING THE SIZE OF THE U.S. 7TH FLEET BASED IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

DESPITE THE SHIP MOVEMENTS, FRIEDHEIM SAID THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION REMAIN FAR FROM A CONFRONTATION.

MEANWHILE, A PRECAUTIONARY ALERT REMAINED IN EFFECT FOR ABOUT 400,000 U.S. SERVICEMEN AS THE RESULT OF THE MIDDLE EAST TENSIONS.

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